

VZCZCXRO3300  
PP RUEHDE RUEHDIR  
DE RUEHMS #1575/01 3121331  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 081331Z NOV 06  
FM AMEMBASSY MUSCAT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7386  
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MUSCAT 001575

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR G/TIP, NEA/ARP AND DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/08/2016  
TAGS: [KCRM](#) [KWMN](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ELAB](#) [MU](#)  
SUBJECT: UN TRAFFICKING RAPPORTEUR'S VISIT TO OMAN

REF: A. MUSCAT 907  
[1](#)B. MUSCAT 1119

Classified By: Ambassador Gary Grappo for reasons 1.4 b/d.

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: The United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur for Trafficking in Persons (TIP) completed a fact-finding mission in Oman on November 7. The Rapporteur flagged as key concerns: the role of recruiting agencies and sponsors in bringing trafficking victims to Oman; the government's lack of a system to identify and care for victims; and evidence of a sex trade. While commending Oman's participation in drafting unified Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) anti-TIP legislation, as well as its creation of a domestic anti-TIP technical committee, she stated that the government still appears unwilling to acknowledge trafficking as a problem. End summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Upon the conclusion of her five-day fact-finding mission on trafficking in Oman, UN Special Rapporteur for Trafficking in Persons, Sigma Huda, detailed her concerns on November 7 during a Muscat press conference and in a private conversation with the Ambassador. Huda called attention to the role in trafficking played by some recruiting agencies in both source countries and Oman, which bring migrant laborers and domestic workers to Oman under false contracts and fictitious sponsorship. Huda said she received first-hand complaints from domestic workers that these practices result in exploitative conditions, including long working hours, lack of sleep, withholding or delay in payment of wages, confiscation of passports, and other forms of physical, mental and verbal abuse. She added that while Oman has procedures for addressing workers' complaints through the Ministry of Manpower and the courts, she was concerned that workers reportedly feel intimidated to pursue criminal or labor cases and that court decisions against Omani sponsors may not be enforced.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Huda called attention to the fact that Oman lacks a system to identify and care for victims. She told the Ambassador that despite her repeated requests, officials did not provide her with statistics on trafficking. She raised concern over accounts that Oman recently conducted indiscriminate sweeps to find, detain and deport migrant workers who were not in possession of valid visas or labor cards. She continued that Omani authorities reportedly did not screen the detainees, and placed them in deportation camps of allegedly substandard conditions. Huda mentioned reports that authorities often do not properly investigate the cases of laborers and domestic workers who have escaped exploitative conditions, sometimes returning them to their sponsors or recruiting agencies, or treating them as illegal workers subject to deportation. Huda stated that she encouraged Oman to follow the example of neighboring Gulf countries to create a system of shelters, and called on the embassies of source countries to develop a unified protection

program.

¶4. (SBU) Huda also focused on prostitution in Oman, stating that she received reports that women from Eastern Europe, Central and East Asia, and the Middle East enter Oman legally on work or visitor visas, but end up in the sex trade. In her private conversation with the Ambassador, Huda stated that members of her delegation witnessed Chinese, Indonesian and Eastern European women dancing and loitering in Muscat bars suspected of supporting prostitution. Despite these allegations, she told the Ambassador that Omani officials flatly deny that prostitution is a problem in Oman. She added, however, that the Royal Oman Police (ROP) told her that its officers investigated 250 cases of sexually-related offenses over the past five years, 83% of which involved foreigners. While the ROP did not clarify the exact nature of the offenses, she postulated that the statistic may include prostitution cases.

¶5. (SBU) In response to questions from Omani and regional media concerning the size of the trafficking problem in Oman, Huda said that it is comparable to that in neighboring countries. She welcomed Oman's participation in GCC efforts to craft unified anti-TIP legislation. She also saluted the government's claim that it has established an interagency technical committee to review domestic legislation and identify TIP vulnerabilities. She mentioned in private, however, that Omani officials did not specify who was on the committee or what authority it actually possesses. She said that she plans to submit her full report and recommendations to the government of Oman in December, and will provide the government with an opportunity to comment before she publishes it in early 2007.

MUSCAT 00001575 002 OF 002

¶6. (C) COMMENT: AMBASSADOR HUDA STATED THAT SHE IS THE FIRST SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR WITH A HUMAN RIGHTS PORTFOLIO TO VISIT OMAN. HER VISIT IS ALSO SIGNIFICANT IN THAT IT MARKS THE FIRST TIME A HIGH-RANKING OFFICIAL OUTSIDE THE USG HAS CALLED ATTENTION PUBLICLY TO TRAFFICKING IN OMAN. YET ACCORDING TO HUDA, GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS REPEATEDLY WERE "IN DENIAL" ABOUT OMAN'S TRAFFICKING PROBLEM. REFLECTING THIS STANCE, COVERAGE OF HER VISIT IN GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED PRESS FOCUSED ON HER PRAISE OF OMAN'S SUPPORT FOR THE GCC INITIATIVE. THE AMBASSADOR TOLD HUDA THAT OMAN FIRST WILL HAVE TO RECOGNIZE IT HAS A TRAFFICKING PROBLEM BEFORE IT CAN TAKE NECESSARY MEASURES TO ADDRESS IT. HE PROMISED TO MAINTAIN REGULAR CONTACT WITH HER AND HER STAFF, SHARE INFORMATION WHEN POSSIBLE AND KEEP HER ABREAST OF OUR EFFORTS TO MOVE THE OMANIS TO ACTION. AMBASSADOR HUDA'S COMMENTS AND ASSESSMENT ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE EMBASSY'S PROPOSED TIP ACTION PLAN, WHICH THE AMBASSADOR PRESENTED TO THE MINISTRIES OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND MANPOWER EARLIER THIS YEAR (REFTELS).  
GRAPPO